



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
DARRELL V. MCGRAW, JR.
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jill Miles

Phone: (304) 558-8986

Scammers Steal Consumers' Identities Through Fake IRS E-Mails

CHARLESTON - Today, Attorney General Darrell McGraw warned West Virginians about a scam that many have received in their e-mail inboxes. The official looking email purports to be from the Internal Revenue Service and advises the consumer that they have a refund coming to them. The consumer is told to click a link that will take him to the form needed to claim his refund. The form will ask the consumer to provide personal identifying information such as social security numbers or bank account numbers. This type of scam, called "phishing," is used to obtain personal information from a consumer so that the scamster can steal the consumer's identity.

Variations of this scam have been around since 2005, when scammers discovered a security flaw in the I.R.S.'s website. This flaw enabled the scammers to send consumers to the official I.R.S. website, and then redirect them to the scamster's website. Now that the security flaw in the government website has been corrected, potential victims are taken directly to the phony website. "Consumers should remember that the I.R.S. will not contact them by e-mail regarding a refund," warns McGraw.

New security freeze legislation went into effect in West Virginia in June of this year. The new law allows consumers' to freeze their credit reports. Once a consumer places a freeze on his credit report, credit reporting bureaus are prohibited from releasing all or any part of the consumer's credit report or any information derived from it without the express authorization of the consumer. "Any consumers who have responded to this phishing scam should contact my Consumer Protection Division and request information on how to freeze their credit reports," said McGraw.

Attorney General McGraw's Consumer Protection Division may be contacted by telephone at 304-558-8986 or 1-800-368-8808, or by e-mail - consumer@wvago.gov.

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